



**Written Testimony of Representative Garey Bies
Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Assembly Bill 217 – Impersonating a Public Safety Officer**

Good morning Chairman Zipperer, Committee members. I appreciate the opportunity to submit my testimony in support of Assembly Bill 217, relating to impersonating public safety officers.

As a former law enforcement officer myself, I can speak directly to the importance we place on the oaths we take to ensure the public's safety. When citizens call upon our aid, it because they find themselves in a situation that may have dire consequences. When we arrive on the scene, we are trusted to serve and protect. We do not take that trust lightly.

When an individual impersonates a law enforcement officer, they violate that trust the people have placed in us. This is a serious offense and is worthy of the significant penalties under current law. For impersonating a law enforcement officer a person is guilty of a misdemeanor offense subject to a fine of up to \$10,000 and imprisonment of no more than 9 months or both. A person who impersonates a law enforcement officer in the commission of a crime is guilty of a felony with a fine of up to \$10,000 and imprisonment of up to 6 years or both.

Assembly Bill 217 extends these penalties to individuals impersonating fire fighters, emergency technicians or first responders. These individuals too receive the public trust, a trust that is sacred and if violated, significant damage can result.

I have authored Assembly Bill 217 at the request of the Wisconsin State Firefighter's Association and am proud to do so.

To illustrate the need for this legislation, recent incidents involving the impersonation of a firefighter include this past spring in Waterloo, Wisconsin, this past February in Pecatonica, Wisconsin, and this past May in Hartford, Wisconsin. In addition, last year a Wisconsin man impersonated a firefighter to scam 21 Wal-Marts all over the state of Michigan. These are just a sample of recent cases and are clear evidence for the need of this legislation.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 217. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

First for Wisconsin!

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